

# State of Connecticut Judiciary Committee

## House Bill 5488

Where do parents of a murdered child stand when it comes to keeping his killer in prison to serve out his sentence, a sentence imposed by his peers.

Do we work on your sympathy, or do we yell and scream? Is no one held accountable for their actions? Or do we say enough is enough and let things go?

Ryan Thompson killed our son Rob on April 19, 1998. From that day on he has never admitted any guilt, expressed sadness or even remorse. His only acknowledgement of this tragedy was to claim that the State Police got the wrong person, yet a jury of 12 felt otherwise.

The proposed bill to release prisoners excludes convicted murderers, but not someone convicted of manslaughter. Ryan Thompson was convicted of 1st degree manslaughter with a firearm. From what we understand, the only difference between murder and manslaughter with a firearm is intent. However, the end result is the same - our son Rob is still dead regardless of intent. Now the State wants to forgive Thompson's sentence and release him early from prison just to save money and make room for more criminals.

It is as if our son's life, as well as every other victim of heinous crime, has been reduced to nothing more than a budget line item. Our son did not deserve what happened to him fourteen years ago, and he does not deserve what is happening now.

Several years ago we left the State of Connecticut and moved to Lakeland, Florida, which is in Polk County. The local sheriff, Grady Judd, removed basketball hoops from the jail. His reasoning was "If they want to play basketball, stay out of jail". This logic, as simple as it sounds makes perfect sense. Why do we keep rewarding convicted criminals for committing crimes? Why are Connecticut's prisons so overcrowded to begin with? Why do so many prisoners end up repeat offenders? Is it because the prisons are not enough of a deterrent against crime?

We ask you to reconsider this bill, or at least re-examine the level of criminal that would be released. Manslaughter and murder, in our opinion, are one in the same. In both instances, the victim is killed and lives are ruined. Ryan Thompson made a conscious decision to use a firearm the day our son was killed. That decision should not be rewarded. As a society, we need to make criminals regret their acts of violence. This will never be accomplished if there is no real punishment befitting of the crime.

Rather than spending time and money figuring out creative ways to house more criminals, why not spend that time and money figuring ways to prevent crime in the first place? The first step would be to stop making it comfortable for the criminal to serve his sentence.

Thank you for your time,  
Nancy and Robert McCaffery  
Formerly of Plainfield, CT